

## New Beginnings for children of divorce

Literature review updated June 2015.

As part of WSIPP's research approach to identifying evidence-based programs and policies, WSIPP determines "what works" (and what does not work) to improve outcomes using an approach called meta-analysis. For detail on our methods, see our [Technical Documentation](#). At this time, WSIPP has not yet calculated benefits and costs for this topic.

**Program Description:** The New Beginnings program focuses on preventing adjustment problems for children whose parents have recently divorced. The single rigorous evaluation examines two variations of the program: a group intervention for mothers and a dual intervention program with groups for mothers and concurrent groups for children. In both variations of the program, the mothers' group focused on problem-solving, discipline strategies, mother-child relationship quality, and the mother's view of the child's relationship with the noncustodial father. In the dual intervention, the children's group focused on recognizing and labeling feelings, problem-solving, and positive re-framing.

### Meta-Analysis of Program Effects

Outcomes measured	No. of effect sizes	Treatment N	Adjusted effect sizes and standard errors used in the benefit-cost analysis						Unadjusted effect size (random effects model)	
			First time ES is estimated			Second time ES is estimated				
			ES	SE	Age	ES	SE	Age	ES	p-value
Internalizing symptoms	1	150	0.084	0.163	17	-0.099	0.155	26	0.150	0.358
Externalizing behavior symptoms	1	150	-0.135	0.163	17	-0.022	0.155	26	-0.240	0.141
Illicit drug use in high school	1	150	-0.036	0.593	17	-0.036	0.593	18	-0.064	0.767
Problem alcohol use	1	164	0.076	0.155	26	0.076	0.155	27	0.136	0.378

Meta-analysis is a statistical method to combine the results from separate studies on a program, policy, or topic in order to estimate its effect on an outcome. WSIPP systematically evaluates all credible evaluations we can locate on each topic. The outcomes measured are the types of program impacts that were measured in the research literature (for example, crime or educational attainment). Treatment N represents the total number of individuals or units in the treatment group across the included studies.

An effect size (ES) is a standard metric that summarizes the degree to which a program or policy affects a measured outcome. If the effect size is positive, the outcome increases. If the effect size is negative, the outcome decreases.

Adjusted effect sizes are used to calculate the benefits from our benefit cost model. WSIPP may adjust effect sizes based on methodological characteristics of the study. For example, we may adjust effect sizes when a study has a weak research design or when the program developer is involved in the research. The magnitude of these adjustments varies depending on the topic area.

WSIPP may also adjust the second ES measurement. Research shows the magnitude of some effect sizes decrease over time. For those effect sizes, we estimate outcome-based adjustments which we apply between the first time ES is estimated and the second time ES is estimated. We also report the unadjusted effect size to show the effect sizes before any adjustments have been made. More details about these adjustments can be found in our [Technical Documentation](#).

## Citations Used in the Meta-Analysis

- Wolchik SA, Sandler IN, Millsap RE, Plummer BA, Greene SM, Anderson ER, et al. (2002). Six-year follow-up of preventive interventions for children of divorce: a randomized controlled trial. *JAMA*, 288 (15), 1874-81.
- Wolchik, S.A., Sandler, I.N., Tein, J.-Y., Mahrer, N.E., Millsap, R.E., Winslow, E., Velez, C., ... Reed, A. (2013). Fifteen-year follow-up of a randomized trial of a preventive intervention for divorced families: Effects on mental health and substance use outcomes in young adulthood. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 81(4), 660-73.

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Printed on 12-12-2016



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